

Engineering Heritage Australia Bulletin: #17

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Notice of Intention to consider removal from the State Heritage Register of Loftus Junction Signal Box (former) in Southern Railway, Loftus, Sutherland

The Heritage Council of NSW resolved, at its meeting of 1 February 2022, to give notice of its intention to consider removing the former Loftus Junction Signal Box from the Heritage Register in acknowledgment that it no longer has state heritage significance to the people of New South Wales. This advice is in accordance with section 33(1)(a) of the *Heritage Act 1977 (NSW)*. This decision was made noting that the item is proposed to be relocated, conserved in the Sydney Tramway Museum, where it is secure and presented to the public.

Any members of the community, owners, managers, or other interested parties are invited to make a written regarding the proposed listing and significance of Loftus Junction Signal Box (former). Submissions should be posted or emailed to the Heritage Council of NSW at the following address during the public submission period commencing on **9 February 2022** and closing on **16 March 2022**:

Heritage Council of NSW
Locked Bag 5020
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124
heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au

The Loftus Junction Signal Box is the best surviving example of a small signal box for a remote function from the Victorian period. The building is of excellent proportion, of high visual quality and in relation to the adjacent tramway museum forms an extremely important element of the south coast railway system. The box has a typically elevated floor to allow the signal equipment to operate under it and was designed to work the junction points and signals. The building has a pitched gable ended corrugated iron roof without eaves overhang. Access is through a door in the up end and a small timber staircase. Windows extend around three sides. The scale of the building is small reflecting the size of the location.

<https://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/protecting-our-heritage/nominate-listing-on-the-state-heritage-register/comment-on-proposed-listings/>

Members of EHA are encouraged to comment, If you have any questions, require further information, or if you do not have internet access and would like paper copies of documents referred to above, please do not hesitate to contact Stuart Read, Senior Heritage Officer, Heritage Programs, South at Heritage NSW on telephone (02) 9873 8554 or email: stuart.read@environment.nsw.gov.au.

See Transport for NSW explanation at the end of this Bulletin.
(From Frank Johnson)

Engineering Heritage Australia Committee

In August 2021 Engineers Australia called for expressions of interest from members interested in a position on the National and Branch Committees of Engineering Heritage Australia. Expressions of interest closed on the 3rd of September 2021.

The National Committee is Engineers Australia's peak heritage body responsible for developing policy and representing Engineers Australia nationally on engineering and industrial heritage matters. The National Committee also manages a number of Australia-wide programs and provides guidance and a degree of coordination to the engineering heritage groups located in each division.

Results from the expression of interest process were reported to the EHA Committee meeting on 15 December 2021 and following a nomination process for Chair and Deputy Chair, members of the Committee commencing 1 January 2022 were confirmed as follows:

Position	Name	Division
Chair	Mike Taylor	WA
Deputy Chair	Richard Muncey	SA
Past Chair	Merv Lindsay	NSW
Member	Allan Churchward	QLD
Member	Angelo Arulanandam	NSW
Member	Philip Willis	ACT
Member	Tony Marjoram	VIC
Member	Richard Baird	VIC
Member	Eamon Madden	NSW
Member	Ben Skerman	QLD

The Committee's first meeting for 2022 is scheduled for 16th March, but much of the work is being done by various sub-committees and in-between meetings. EHA has developed a new strategic plan for 2022-2024 which will be reviewed at the next meeting and the Engineering Heritage Recognition Program Committee is also making progress on a major review of the Program's Guidelines.

(From Mike Taylor)

The 90th anniversary of the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge

The upcoming March 19th is the 90th anniversary of the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Watch for commemorative initiatives from the authorities.

(From Ian Bowie)

The latest bulletin from TICCIH

The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH) has issued its latest bulletin (bulletin 95), attached, which features two interesting articles on industrial heritage in Australia and many others on industrial heritage around the world.

(From Max Underhill)

Thirlmere Festival of Steam, 12-13 March 2022

Thirlmere village will awaken to the enchanting sound of the steam whistle for the annual Thirlmere Festival of Steam.

The event will feature more steam engines in steam than ever before. Enjoy steam train rides with locomotives 3265, 3526, 3642, 3801 and Beyer-Garratt 6029.

Locomotives 2705 and 3001 will also be in steam, with 2705 providing driver's cab visits and 3001 on display inside the Roundhouse.

For more information and tickets, visit [Thirlmere Festival of Steam](#).

(From Firas Shawash)

Loftus Signal Box Relocation:

Transport for NSW explanation of the context and reasons for the request to the Heritage Council of NSW to de-list the Loftus Junction Signal Box from the State Heritage Register

Nearly nine years ago, in June 2013, the Heritage Council of NSW recommended that the Loftus Junction Signal Box, dating from 1886, should be de-listed from the State Heritage Register. The Heritage Council resolved that the main significance of the place was for its associations with the military branch line into the Royal National Park, for marking the original site of Loftus Railway Station, and as the last example of this early type of signal box in the Illawarra. The minutes noted that: "due to its location within the rail corridor it is not suitable for reuse by external parties, is surplus to RailCorp's operating requirements and has not been identified as suitable for any future operational purposes . . . The members agreed that the Loftus Railway Junction Signal Box, despite its rarity, is of local heritage significance due to its lack of integrity".

The signal box had lost some of its integrity when Loftus Station was re-positioned 300 metres north in 1917, leaving it a stand-alone structure in the rail corridor. During the 1940s, the signal box was itself repositioned on a new concrete base adjacent to its original location; in 1953 its signalling equipment was replaced (and remains partly in situ); from the 1960s it had a number of unsympathetic alterations including boarding up its windows and the addition of a lean-to (removed in 2019); in 1979 the railway branch line it had serviced to the Royal National Park was closed; and in 1991 it was de-commissioned. Since then, the structure has weathered much vandalism and graffiti. Its present position, closely adjacent to an active railway line, precludes installation of surrounding fencing for security.

In 2013 the members of the Heritage Council had resolved that the de-listing should be completed under delegation, “on condition that RailCorp finds a suitable relocation site”. Such a suitable relocation site has finally been identified and negotiated – the Sydney Tramway Museum, which is located nearby at Loftus. The museum has agreed to have the signal box relocated inside the museum’s secured premises just 1.2km north of its current location. Sydney Trains will fund the relocation of the structure, including any moveable heritage, and carry out conservation works in its new location.

Sydney Trains considers this to be a most appropriate outcome for the signal box as it will still remain adjacent to the same railway line heading into the Royal National Park, it will be located in a more secure location protecting it from vandalism and graffiti, and it will be less prone to the threat of bushfire from nearby Royal National Park bushland. Also importantly, the museum will make the conserved signal box available for inspection by the general public, who currently don’t have access because it is located in an operating rail environment. The signal box will remain locally heritage listed on the Sutherland Council LEP.

Photo of the Loftus Junction Signal Box in August 2021 (graffitied following conservation works in 2019)

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Contributions needed

Readers are invited to share news, bright ideas, issues of concern, advice about online talks – anything that would be of interest and helpful to others, by sending them to editor Firas Shawash at fshawash@yahoo.com for inclusion in the next Bulletin - more Australia-wide content would be appreciated.

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